

Transcript

Jahan Culbreath: Good afternoon. I'm Jahan Culbreath, CHEA's Director of Federal Relations and welcome to this afternoon's webinar on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion or DEI. This is the third of a series of webinars that CHEA has held on the important topic of DEI. This webinar series is designed to inform members and the accreditation community by featuring leaders from higher education institutions, from accrediting organizations.

We ask that you if you have any questions after the presentation, please make sure you use the chat room to put the questions in. So we're very pleased to have with us today, Dr. Taffye Benson Clayton, a leader in the field of higher education, diversity and inclusion. Dr. Taffye Benson Clayton is a vice President and Associate Provost for inclusion and diversity at Auburn University.

She serves as the designated executive administrator for coordinating Auburn's diversity and inclusion strategy and is the university's principal advocate with the President and other senior leaderships on issues related to diversity and inclusion. She has a national reputation for her work in leadership, in higher education, diversity and inclusion. She is particularly well-known for her presentations on faculty diversity, recruitment and retention, institutionalizing diversity, equity and inclusion, and translating promising corporate diversity and inclusion practices into the higher education context.

She serves on a variety of boards and committees focused on advancing higher education, diversity and inclusion. So today we want to welcome Dr. Taffye Benson Clayton, thanks for joining us.

Dr. Taffye Benson Clayton: Thank you so much, Mr. Culbreath. Good afternoon, colleagues. And thanks to the Council of Higher Education Accreditation, President Dr. Cynthia Jackson-Hammond for inviting me to speak with you as representatives of CHEA member institutions from across the nation and globe. Thanks also to your colleagues for being so helpful in preparation for and during today's webinar Higher Education, Accreditation and Diversity, Equity and inclusion are each important topics separately.

However, taken together, they are both timely and relevant as we consider our modern national higher education landscape. To begin today's presentation, I'd like to level set by highlighting two areas that are central to today's discussion. First, I will share our initial thoughts about the connection between institutional mission and DEI and higher education, a connection that I will delve more deeply into further into this talk.

And second, I will reference and define several terms that will be mentioned throughout this presentation.

Accrediting bodies provide affiliated institutions with a formal external process of evaluation based on a set of recognized standards in accordance with the mission and goals of the institution. Such processes serve as a cornerstone of institutional self-regulation and self-governance toward the attainment of the institutional academic quality, toward institutional effectiveness and student achievement, all anchored and driven by an institutions mission. Similar to the centrality of institutional mission in accreditation processes as it relates to strategic diversity, equity and inclusion, DEI efforts in higher education, there is a direct connection between institutional mission and diversity, equity and inclusion. So a real similarity in institutions. Mission is a guiding force for enabling and advancing DEI work. Whether community colleges or four-year bachelor's, master's or doctoral

granting universities, we are increasingly familiar with engaging DEI related matters as central to institutional mission, as integral to the effectiveness and the capacity of our institutions toward mission fulfillment, and then is vital to the realization of coeducational access opportunity, student learning, and achievement.

So as we examine contemporary mission statements across higher education institutions, we find that DEI is consistently reflected in those statements. Whether that's implicitly or whether that's explicitly in the same manner, CHEA as an organization has always embraced the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion since its inception and in May of 2021, she is Board of Directors adopted a diversity, equity and inclusion statement.

So she is commitment is now more explicitly stated. Here's an excerpt from a CHEA document about DEI and you see the language here on the screen. It really helps illuminate the inextricable linkages between quality assurance and higher education, as well as the values of diversity, equity and inclusion. And I'm going to reference these linkages between academic quality DEI and student success throughout today's discussion.

Now, so far, I've talked about why DEI is relevant in higher education accreditation processes, and I showcased she is mission and DEI statement while referencing the relationship and the connection between institutional mission statements and DEI. Going forward, today's presentation will reference demographic shifts and what those changes mean for the future of higher education. Describe an effective model for advancing DEI within our higher education institutions.

Define Inclusive Excellence and explain how it strategically enables the advancement of DEI on our campuses. And then it will describe how to embed DEI throughout key domains in a featured Inclusive Excellence model so that our institutions can strategically advance this philosophy. Now let's level set by establishing a mutual understanding about how the diversity, equity and inclusion terminology that I'm going to be using today is defined.

Diversity is defined in broad and encompassing terms as the whole of the human experience, including the qualities that you see listed on the top portion of the slide. There are some human identities and attributes that have social and or historical significance. Our understanding of these identities and attributes is important as education leaders, given our nation's history and our increasing, diverse and complex local and global society.

Now the broad and encompassing nature of diversity is also about presence. So within that, the six internal categories outlined in the innermost light blue circle of this diversity will we see several federally protected classes reflected beyond the more commonly known protected classes as presents shows up in a variety of ways within our organizations, from human aspects of difference like age and ethnicity to organizational aspects of difference, lack of faculty or staff, role, seniority or rank, but even remote or on site, flesh and person or hybrid are new differentiated considerations for how employees identify as there may be multiple work modality options within any given organization.

Diversity is also inclusive of dimensions that can be found both above and below the waterline of visibility. There are aspects of diversity that, while we may not see them, they are quite relevant and also quite salient. Over the last ten years in higher education, we have begun to recognize and be more responsive to the needs of various segments of our student population.

Segments like first generation students, nontraditional students, military and veteran students, and international students and faculty have service units and programmatic efforts designed to specifically address their needs. Additionally, the impact of COVID-19 on households financially and the racial reckoning following the death of George Floyd. Elevated conversations about matters of student debt. The profile of students who are most adversely affected illuminates the socio socioeconomic diversity that exists across student populations on our campuses.

The diversity wheel, the waterline of visibility, and these segmented illustrations provide examples of the broad and encompassing nature of diversity. Now, next, we turn to the term equity. And to make a final point about the definition of this term, I'm defining it in contrast to another closely related but different term. In some instances, people may use the words equality and equity interchangeably.

However, they actually have different meanings. Equality is about having the same exact resources, and then equity reflects resources distributed based on needs said slightly differently. Equality and equity both promote fairness and equality achieves this through treating everyone the same, regardless of need. While equity achieves this through treating people differently depending on need. Important descriptors that accompany equity language in higher education have emerged in recent years.

Leaders across sectors are speaking more about matters of social equity, gender equity, health equity and racial equity. This equity minded language describes the process of addressing gaps and disparities based on things like gender, race, socio economic status and health. As a few examples. Now to place equity even more squarely into an educational context, the Center for Urban Education and Dr. Estella Bensimon provide a great illustration, noting that equality imagines an equal world.

But we know that inequality exists as we consider differences among our prospective or current students. For example, regarding those with access to social networks and social capital and those without. Those with access to honors, AP and I.B. courses or highly trained teachers, and those without those existing in a mid to upper-class socio-economic strata. And perhaps with parents who are college educated or grandparents who are college educated, and those who do not, and those with access to scholarships and or resources and those without.

To just eliminate. To illuminate a few examples. Now, equity can involve strategically deploying resources to make higher education pathways more accessible and to intentionally provide support through disaggregating and analyzing the data, through understanding the differences and gaps in experiences, realities and incomes, and by setting goals and implementing action plans. We can even train and equip faculty as equity facilitators and engage in sustained inquiry regarding equity related issues.

Indeed, a culture of sustained inquiry is a model practice by learning organizations that are in touch with the data, the experiences, the realities and the gaps regarding their people and their institutions. Now this term equity mindedness coined by Dr. Estela Bensimon, refers to the perspective or mode of thinking exhibited by practitioners who call attention to patterns of inequity in student outcomes.

These practitioners are willing to take personal and institutional responsibility for the success of their students and critically reassess their own practices. Equity mindedness also requires that practitioners are race conscious and aware of the social and historical context of exclusionary practices in American

higher education. And lastly, on this matter of equity, there is a new concept referred to as shared equity leadership.

Conceptualized by Dr. Adriana Kezar, Dean's Professor of Leadership and director of the Pullias Center for Higher Education. And Dr. Elizabeth Holcombe, senior postdoctoral research associate. It was published in a report actually in partnership with the American Council on Education or ACE, which outlines, interestingly, how inclusive and collaborative approaches to leadership are necessary to achieve equitable outcomes. Kezar and Holcomb's Shared Equity Leadership publication highlights a model in which equity values and practices are cultivated and adopted by leaders across the campus, and they fuel institutional progress.

This well-coordinated, institutionally broad approach engages key campus leaders across the administration, faculty and staff to be a part of the DEI progress and outcomes desired by institutions. And this collective approach allows the work of equity to be scaled institutionally toward greater impact. And what about inclusion? Inclusion puts diversity into action. It does so by creating environments where people are respected, where they're acknowledged, they're engaged, and they feel they belong.

An inclusive environment. People should feel like they are treated with dignity, and they're valued from an organizational perspective. When diversity is present and inclusion is practiced, organizations can harness and leverage diversity as a strength to solve problems and to produce educational benefits, like in a personal capacity, with engaging difference, critical thinking, analytical and cultural competency skills. Just to name a few benefits

Additionally, inclusion allows diverse teams to work through the dissonance of difference that often occurs. To generate innovative solutions to complex problems. Ultimately, by normalizing and advancing DEI our institutions develop a competitive advantage. Now the modern context of our present day the nation and the world we live in is defined by a global economy, rapidly changing demographics, and increasingly diverse and globally minded students.

DEI related matters have significant prominence in today's society and within our respective organizations. Today's perspective students, college students and their parents, when considering where they will apply and enroll in college factor the level of diversity within the student body and among the faculty into their decision-making calculus. Many students consider it a benefit to be exposed to, to interact with, and to learn from students, faculty and staff who are different from them.

In fact, faculty who identify in many cases as Millennial or Gen Z are likely to factor DEI commitment prominently into their decision-making calculus regarding where they desire to begin their academic careers. As do non faculty millennial and Gen Z aspiring professionals. Changing demographics and moments of racial reckoning have further amplified societal and educational inequities, which, if not addressed intentionally and in effective ways, can create challenges for our nation's economy, for our workforce, our national security, and for our democracy.

The evolving DEI landscape that I just described provides a compelling context for the creation of new scholarship and knowledge. Researchers have been taking a closer look at how these changes will impact the future of higher education and what institutions need to do to prepare for the continuing advancement of their mission through teaching, research and service and the success of their students, faculty, employees and communities.

While useful during their time, old models in diversity, were defined by programs and special projects. They were characterized by uncoordinated and often non-strategic action that was disconnected from the academic core of the institution and existed without assessment or accountability. With the acceleration of change in society and the implications for higher education, old diversity models while previously effective, are inadequate to address current DEI needs.

Newer models within higher education now involve updated approaches that are more strategic, more comprehensive and evidence based with frameworks that are well-researched and agile. The increase of useful research, these conceptual models and these frameworks has sharpened expertise and practice. Efforts to advance DEI are informed and driven by data and refined based upon routine patterns of assessment, based on key indicators and relevant DEI domains that I'm going to discuss with you shortly.

Enhanced DEI models allow leaders in higher education to employ more strategic and sophisticated approaches to advancing DEI work. Now, these approaches involve a mission driven approach. Goals and strategies that are aligned with the priorities of the institution institutional commitments, policies, practices, and behaviors that are inculcated into the institutional culture and sustained by assessment and accountability. The integration of sustained practices that strategically advance DEI approaches in higher education is a positive marker for DEI effectiveness and is important in institutional accreditation processes.

With the increased focus on DEI and disaggregated student retention achievement and completion information, all higher education institutions are wise to adopt more strategic, mission driven approaches to advancing this important work. While important to all higher ed campuses. This is especially vital to our one institutions as major external funding agencies and entities increasingly evaluate institutional readiness in DEI as a factor in awarding grant resources.

Now the concept and framework that really captures how DEI is being strategically and effectively advanced at institutions is Inclusive Excellence. Inclusive Excellence establishes a comprehensive strategy for achieving institutional excellence, links diversity and quality and excellence, promotes the academic excellence of all students, promotes a data driven approach, and promotes a culture of organizational learning. This concept of organizational learning is one I'm particularly fond of, and it's important as it is, the process of institutions becoming committed to generating the data to answer the types of questions that can inform efforts to make excellence a more inclusive endeavor on our campuses.

By doing this, we become learning organizations. When we establish routine processes for being informed about DEI progress with relevant, disaggregated data that provides us with a knowledge of whether or not we are trending in the right direction along key indicators and offers an indication of areas where we need to acknowledge and celebrate success, which is important, or the need for improvement.

The need to pay closer attention. Or to even take a much closer look in and in some instances even to course correct.

My colleague, Dr. Damon A Williams and fellow co-authors Drs. Berger and McLendon say it this way. You see it on the screen, IE is the active process through which colleges and universities chief

excellence in all of the different areas that you see reflected on the slide? It reinvisions quality of diversity, which I've spoken about and reflects a striving for excellence in higher ed.

And it talks about how this work has been underway for years. Our efforts to make or to create greater inclusion by infusing diversity into recruiting, into admissions and hiring into the curriculum and co-curriculum and into administrative structures and practices. Now, the version of the comprehensive model developed by the American Association for Colleges and Universities, AACU, and Dr. Darrell G. Smith is utilized by campuses nationwide and offers an Inclusive Excellence framework in which institutional mission is centered. Higher education institutional mission statements are directly connected to academic excellence and academic quality and rooted in an institution's capacity to deliver a high-quality education to each student. The individual— excuse me— the institution enrolls. Now let's take a look at each domain and the related indicators.

We'll start within the access and success domain, and we see that the impact indicators that are listed are undergraduate and graduate composition. So that matter of presence, pursuit of advanced degrees, graduation, persistence, participation and honors in STEM and then successful transfer. And if we look down, we see the education and scholarship domain either down or over. The impact indicators that are listed are curriculum, research, faculty capacity and learning outcomes.

If we look over to the climate and intergroup relations domain, the impact indicators that are listed are the type and quality of interactions, the quality of campus engagement and then internal perceptions of the institution. And as we look within the institutional vitality and viability domain, the impact indicators are diversity of faculty and staff, board and leadership engagement, public perception, then indicators, and a framework for monitoring diversity.

Now, this list of impact indicators that I've share, while it's not exhaustive, it's quite representative of some of the most prominent indicators within each domain across many campuses. By considering the Inclusive Excellence framework, its domains and its indicators, we can begin to ask the types of probing questions that are posed by institutions committed to organizational learning. So let's take, for example, that first domain I talked about access and success. In that domain, some of the corresponding questions that you out there could be asking about your campus or perhaps you already are. Does our campus have an admissions process that yields that reflects rich yields in diversity? Are we successful recruiting Native American, Latinx, and African American students? And then what are the distribution patterns of scholarships and grants to students? What do our pathway and outreach programs look like?

And our colleges and students— excuse me, colleges and schools developing pathway programs to address the lack of underrepresented students in critical disciplines. And maybe what are those critical disciplines at your institution? And what are those critical disciplines nationally? Does our campus disaggregate undergraduate and graduate student data by fields and discipline and levels? If so, what does the data tell us about the academic progress of various student segments?

All-important key probing questions and moving to probing questions in the education and scholarship domain. With regards to availability, what is the presence of diversity related courses throughout the curriculum and diversity course requirements within the curriculum? Are there curriculum committees that actively study the effective integration of diversity, equity and inclusion into courses with regard to learning? What is the quantity and substantive aspect of student learning about diversity?

Is there substance there? What about the capstone and dissertations about diversity, equity and inclusion? Do we do an inventory? Do we know how that's impacting? What kind of research is being generated? And then are there enough substantive curricular learning opportunities around issues of diversity, equity and inclusion? And is our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion fostering an increase in research related research, or I should say in diversity related research?

Continuing on in the education and scholarship domain because this is a meaty one experience. What are the course taking patterns of students? Do we have research that engages the community and specific questions? Is our commitment to DEI influencing the course taking patterns of our students? Is our commitment to DEI increasing the number of faculty who engage our diverse community, our region, our society as a laboratory for research? With regards to faculty capacity, what about the level of expertise on DEI related matters on our campuses? Are faculty offered professional development opportunities to explore inclusive of approaches to pedagogy and are there systems in place to reward and recognize faculty whose students excel and whose pedagogy excels, as a result of the use of these pedagogical approaches? And in the climate and intergroup relations domain, as we think about the types and quality of interactions that exist on our campuses among differentiated groups, right, that wonderfully diverse mix that we have on our campuses, how does the university create spaces for dialogue among intra cultural groups and then intercultural groups? How do we do that? Regarding perceptions of the institution internally climate, commitment, fairness. What are the perceptions of our faculty, staff, students and the community about the institution's commitment to DEI?

And what is the level of overall employment satisfaction? What is the level of overall educational satisfaction? All-important domain questions. And moving into this final domain, institutional viability and vitality. As we consider our institutions history right across those of you who are who are attending the webinar as we consider the institutional history of diverse issues and incidents, what is the history of the institution with respect to the issues? And then regarding the centrality of diversity in our mission and our planning strategically, can DEI be identified in the vision and the mission? Many times the answer is yes. And the strategic goals of the University. And with regard to public and constituent perceptions, which organizations or forms can reflect public and constituent perceptions of DEI, with respect to the University? Further, what about board engagement with diversity in the composition of our boards? Are they actively supporting DEI? What is the current racial and ethnic composition? Gender, as well? From an inclusive perspective, are individuals integrally engaged in governing and in decision making? And then finally, the compositional diversity of faculty, staff and administrators by level.

What's been the history compositionally? What's changed over years? And then, if not, if there hasn't been a change and hopefully there has been. But if there hasn't. What strategies are we devising and implementing toward addressing more compositional diversity? Are those strategies well resourced? Are they well-coordinated and are they supported institutionally in the colleges and departmental? Folks, these are the questions asked by learning institutions desiring to live out their institution's mission and deliver on the promise of higher education attainment for students inclusively.

We should all aspire for our institution to be among those asking, and hopefully we are asking, answering and strategically addressing these vital questions as they are directly linked to the mission, to the future, to the effectiveness and to the overall success of our institution. And colleagues, I'm going to end as I begin highlighting language from the Council of Higher Education Accreditation and underscoring the point that higher education accreditation and diversity, equity and inclusion are each important topics separately.

However, taken together, they're both timely and relevant as we consider our modern national higher education landscape. Accrediting bodies provide affiliated institutions with the formal external process of evaluation based on a set of recognized standards in accordance with the mission and goals of the institutions. Such processes serve as cornerstones of institutional self-regulation and self-government. Governance for the attainment of institutional, academic quality, institutional effectiveness and student achievement.

They're all anchored and driven by an institution's mission. Similarly, institutional mission drives strategic approaches to DEI within higher education institutions. As we strive to effectively educate all the students that we enroll, you see here that she believes that the rich values of equity, diversity and inclusion are inextricably linked to quality assurance in higher education. The linkages and the relationships are clear.

We have a real opportunity, in my view, and even a responsibility to fully realize DEI as integral to institutional effectiveness on our campuses across the nation and the world. Thank you.

Jahan Culbreath: Thank you so much, Dr. Benson. Clayton That was wonderful and what an amazing content and everything for our audience. I think there's so many takeaways to help our organizations. So thank you for that. But we've got a couple of questions. One is what's the best way to begin advancing an IE model at a higher education institution?

Dr. Taffye Benson Clayton: So that's a really great question, and it's one that I have certainly done some thinking about, and I've seen it happen on a number of different campuses. I think the first opportunity that you have is to introduce the concept to the campus community. You want to focus on specific campus stakeholders and partners like senior leaders, of course, provost, deans, their associates, their assistants, department heads.

You all know the way that our campuses are organized. Senior faculty, teaching faculty, faculty governance and other governance bodies and etc. I think also there are key campus partners when you begin to try to advance a model like this. Right? You're socializing it. You're sharing it. You're sharing some of the research with regard to it. But partners like Institutional Effectiveness, partners like Centers for Teaching and Learning, Academic Success and Support Operations, Student Affairs, and FYE, first year experience, operations all vitally important to this work.

And then you have offices like the one I lead that are typically key offices and providing leadership to the socialization process and to the implementation of these practices really throughout the institution. But certainly that work is done quite collaboratively across the institution. It's especially helpful and some of you all probably have this when you have localized infrastructure, for example in your academic units or in your colleges or schools, when you have DEI leaders here, we have DEI leaders that are connected with our institutional office where they work in their settings, and they lead that work in those settings.

Having that infrastructure is really helpful when you're trying to launch something of this magnitude and having everyone involved in it, because certainly everyone has a role to play is certainly important. It should be a broad and an institutional effort, broad and encompassing, just like the definition of diversity. The effort should be that as well.

Jahan Culbreath: You mentioned some of the senior leaders and other leaders on campus, such as the presidents, provost and vice president, having them involved. What really is their role as it relates to the success of inclusion and excellence model for the implementation?

Dr. Taffye Benson Clayton: You know, I think senior leaders always have the opportunity to play a supportive role generally in terms of this work. But I'll talk even more specifically about some roles that maybe people haven't thought about, but these leaders actually matter and work like this, and that could be your VP for advancement. Some people call it development, some people call it fundraising, working collaboratively with others to develop new innovative fundraising ideas to fill equity gaps for students.

Right. That's a way a person in that role could get involved or the CFO who's thinking about what resources may need to be differently allocated in order to support a new institutional initiative. That's how that person would be involved, not the only way, but one way. And then the provost, who really affirms the importance of continuously improving on key impact where progress is needed.

That's typically a message that we value or that I amplify. If that's out there, that's important. A culture of continuous improvement around inclusive excellence is something that that a provost could certainly give voice to. And then you have presidents who they just get to champion this work, champion the philosophy and really illuminate milestones and points of progress and success along the way.

The reality is that Inclusive Excellence is a journey and any progress, any challenges, any success, it's all shared, right? Is shared by leaders across our campus, by our faculty, by our staff, by our students. Because the journey is ongoing and it's one really towards continuous improvement.

Jahan Culbreath: How do you look at the role of an accreditation organization, their responsibility to encourage institutions to envision DEI perspectives?

Dr. Taffye Benson Clayton: I think it's you know; it is one of the wonderful things that you can view as core. And I really like the way CHEA has done that in terms of illuminating the inextricable linkages between the two. I really think in many ways CHEA's commitment really is the essence of Inclusive Excellence, right? It's about understanding that to be excellent, particularly in an environment where our population is shifting and becoming more diverse.

To be excellent is to be diverse. To be diverse is to be excellent. We want to be creating inclusive environments of excellence for all to be able to engage. But I think it's a mission based on core based and also a values-based opportunities for accreditation entities to really sort of indicate the importance of it and also see it.

It's really embedded. And maybe that's. Mr. Culbreath Maybe that's because I'm a CDO vice president of DEI, but it is so much and should be so much of a part of everything we're doing. So using that lens and really approaching it from, from that perspective. So I think I'm going to be looking to in a more I think my interest is peaked now even more to hear about what more regional accreditation entities are doing with respect to this work as well, because I know there's activity there, too.

Jahan Culbreath: Yeah, absolutely. Another question that came up is the importance what is the importance for an institution or an organization to have a Chief Diversity Officer to advance the DEI

and Inclusive Excellence? And another part of that is, do you find that sometimes perhaps smaller institutions that people have dual roles and responsibilities?

Dr. Taffye Benson Clayton: Absolutely. I'll answer the last question first. Absolutely. Depending on the size of your institution. There could be an individual who has some has a dual role. Right. They may be in a faculty member in a department, and then they may have DEI related responsibilities. I think it really is this interesting strategic breakpoint where institutions have to consider when they're at the point of needing someone to really be engaged and focused on this work full time.

I would say someone in a diversity capacity, whether that's going to be part-time because of the or have having a shared role, because of the size of the responsibility or maybe full-time. Right. For a large, sprawling academic enterprise is important. And I say that because there's a level of expertise, there's a level of content expertise, a level of experience, and there's a level of strategy that will really be an asset to advancing the full scope of Inclusive Excellence at an institution.

And of course, it's important that these kinds of skills and things that I'm talking about right are actually evidenced in the CDO profile. But when that is the case, it's both helpful and I think it's necessary. And we find ourselves often as vice presidents, associate provosts, CDOs, appropriately so, being the center point for strategic coordination. And there's a depth of understanding in terms of how various strategies and institutional pieces, initiative, support services, programs, how all of that works together.

We also have the benefit of having often a 50,000-foot view. So this stuff allows for us to be able to understand some of the dots that need to be connected in ways that others may not. So, yes, I do think CDO roles are important to help advance this. And I think that how those roles are formatted certainly depends on the type and the size of the university.

Jahan Culbreath: So if an institution has someone or a group of folks that are kind of new to it, is there a resource or somewhere that they can go to get training or some more education?

Dr. Taffye Benson Clayton

There actually is, and there's several places I would start by noting an organization that does that. The National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education provides an annual conference, provides a standards of professional practice institute, and provides a number of webinars that are totally DEI focused, really talking about strategic approaches and focusing in on Inclusive Excellence. That's a resource.

I love lots of the publications that are out there. Okay, so I love a good book, a good report about it as well, but that's one example. There are many others, but that's one I'll highlight.

Jahan Culbreath: Okay. Just a few more questions. Have you found that many institutions focus more on diversity and tend to kind of know ignore or minimize the equity and inclusive constructs?

Dr. Taffye Benson Clayton: Yeah, they can. And I probably wouldn't use the language ignore. I think diversity is a foundational entry point for institutions. You know, early on the first building block was to get diverse presence into institutions. So I talked about those older models for diversity. It really is getting into giving a nod to the fact that that's how that started.

It's not adequate for now, but it certainly made sense then. And so to some degree, yes, that may be happening on campuses, but we have to update our knowledge. Right. Look at some of the more modern scholarship out there and it gives us a real pathway. I think we have to begin looking, though, at matters of equity and inclusion and equity, because we know that gaps and disparities exist, and we're uniquely, often positioned as institutions to address those disparities and to address those inequities and to make things much better for our students.

And then the inclusion part. Important as well as a corporate professional put it, you know, it's not just being you know, invited to the dance. And I'm using this because this is used a lot. It's being able to so fully engage, right. To be able to dance, asked to dance and to maybe be a part of creating the playlist in higher education.

We know it really is about active, ongoing, intentional efforts to really to reap the educational benefits of diversity and also creating the kind of context where people feel they belong and where they're valued in respect.

Jahan Culbreath: Hmm. So you mentioned the old diversity model. So if an institution is just beginning their journey, is it possible for them to, let's just say, skip the old diversity models and jump right into the enhanced DEI models?

Dr. Taffye Benson Clayton: Yeah, I would even argue that by necessity, because we where we find ourselves societally, it would be important for practitioners and universities to really begin to acquaint themselves with some of the newer evidence based approaches that are out there, the promising practices and even benchmarking with universities that are similar to your own colleges, that are similar to your own community college, that are similar to your own, and determining what are the similarly situated institutions and the most promising practices where they have seen impact.

And that's always a great way to start making a phone call to your peer or your colleague there, comparing notes, right, and beginning that process of really understanding what are the needs on your campus, and then how can you address those needs more effectively with some of the most current strategies and practices?

Jahan Culbreath: Okay. And one last question. How important is it for faculty engagement in implementing Inclusive Excellence on campus— and I'm going to even take it a step further— having students involved as well?

Dr. Taffye Benson Clayton: Yes, I think both are critical. Both are critical faculty leadership on and involvement in Inclusive Excellence implementation. It's really required to advance the practices at a college and departmental level. And quite frankly, in the classroom where they're in involved with and having impact on students. Faculty across the nation are employing these Inclusive Excellence strategies to build inclusive classrooms and to engage in inclusive pedagogy.

And, you know, I really think that because Inclusive Excellence s so much about the academic core of the institution, that that that faculty are a key part of that. Now, with respect to students, they are as well. When we talk about environments of inclusion, how students are experience seeing our campus, how they're experiencing the broader environment on campus, the broader communities in some instances, and even how they're experiencing the classroom, they have a voice and they often share

with us through climate assessments that are typically administered by an office like mine for an institution.

We are able to get that feedback and to get a sense of what we're doing well and where we have opportunities and head room for growth. But both faculty and staff are absolutely critical to advancing Inclusive Excellence. And when it's done well, our faculty are able to really feel good about and hopefully be rewarded for the difference that they've made in the classroom through some more innovative pedagogy that helps to eliminate, diminish or eliminate some of the gaps in equity and achievement that may actually be present.

And so they're very active players in this process.

Jahan Culbreath: That's great. Well, listen, we've run out of time, but I want to, if you would, some closing remarks. I think that this has just been really amazing and just so full of just great knowledge and everything for our audience. So thank you for that. But I'd like to hear your closing remarks.

Dr. Taffye Benson Clayton: I appreciate the opportunity that I have to talk to organizations like CHEA and other organizations nationally, statewide, and even my colleagues at various institutions about the importance of Inclusive Excellence. I think that the work of DEI has really moved from margins to center, and that we have, as I mentioned earlier, a real opportunity and I think even a responsibility to help advance important work on our campus using an Inclusive Excellence model to help drive progress.

So thank you so much for this opportunity to engage.

Jahan Culbreath: Dr. Benson Clayton Thank you for what you do. Thank you for helping to move the needle. You've made a huge difference. You've made a huge difference in this webinar today. So my encouragement is keep doing what you're doing because I know you're getting positive results and in helping others to move their organizations forward. But we really appreciate you.

So thank you so much for your time. And I just want to encourage our audience for this and other information please visit CHEA.ORG, but thank you so much and take care.

Dr. Taffye Benson Clayton: Thank you.